The Way of Life

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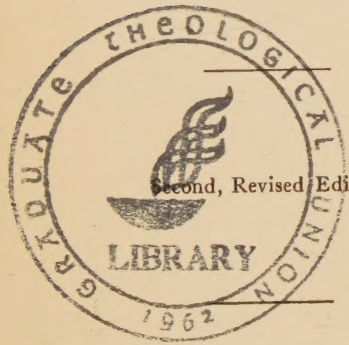
THE WAY OF LIFE

OR

WHY SHOULD YOU BE A CHRISTIAN AND A CHURCH-MEMBER?

BY G. LUECKE



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Prefatory Note to the Second Edition

THE text of the first edition has been carefully gone over, and a number of corrections and changes have been made, in accordance with criticisms and suggestions received from various sources. I wish to express my hearty thanks to the brethren and friends for the many words of appreciation and commendation which they have been kind enough to extend to me. May the blessing of God continue to rest upon the booklet, so that it may be instrumental in leading many erring souls on to the way of life.

G. LUECKE.

Beardstown, Ill., March 12, 1912.

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Introduction

During the Middle Ages kings often kept "jesters" whose business it was to entertain their masters, together with their courtiers. These court-jesters were privileged characters who reproved with impunity the faults of their princes, a thing which nobody else dared to do. One of these was one day presented with a staff by his master with the direction: "If you ever find a greater fool than yourself, give him this staff." Some time afterwards the prince was taken dangerously ill, and the jester visited him. The master told him that he would soon leave him. "Where are you going?" asked the jester. "To another world," was the reply. "When are you going to return? Within a month?" "No." "In a year?" "No." "Well, when are you going to return?" "Never." "And with what did you provide yourself for such a long journey and for your sojourn in that other world?" "With nothing whatever." "Here, take my staff," now replied the jester. "You are going to make a journey into another world where you expect to remain forever, and have made no preparations so that you may live happily there? Take my staff, for I have never yet been guilty of such a folly. You are a greater fool than I."

How is it with you, my dear friend? You, too, must some time take that long journey to

the other world. Have you made your preparations for it? Or are you like that foolish prince? Do you belong to that numerous class of people who go through this life, bent only on enjoying the fleeting pleasures which this earth affords, and unconcerned about what might be their lot after death? Or have you been caught in the current of this materialistic, money-mad age? Is the acquisition of wealth your only ambition, causing you to forget that some time you must leave behind every dollar that you may amass? Oh, if your heart is engrossed with the desire for pleasures, riches, and honor, do pause a moment, I beseech you, and consider whether these fleeting things really constitute man's true happiness, or whether, after all, this happiness is not to be sought in the world beyond the grave.

Or do you doubt, or even deny, the existence of a world beyond the grave? Do you belong to those who profess to believe that man lives only for this world, that there is no God, no eternity, no heaven nor hell? If you do, also then I would plead with you to listen to the arguments for the other side. Suppose that, after all, you are in error! Suppose that there is, after all, a God and an eternity! Suppose that you will, after all, be summoned before His judgment-throne to answer for your life on this earth! And if there is a heaven and a hell, to which of these places do you expect to go if you persist in your present course?

But perhaps you belong to neither of these two classes. Perhaps you are already a Chris-

tian and are earnestly striving to work out your salvation. If you are, the angèls of God are rejoicing over the fact. But you are still in the world, surrounded by manifold temptations and dangers for your soul. You need constant strengthening of your faith. And so I would ask also you to read and ponder what is written in these pages. By the grace of God it will ground you more firmly in knowledge and faith, and furnish you with arguments against those who assail your religion and would rob you of your hope.

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I.

IS THERE A GOD?

A momentous question! Is there a God? Is there a great Higher Being who made the world, and preserves and governs it? Is there a God to whom also man owes his existence, to whom he is therefore subject, and hence responsible for all his actions? Is there a God who rewards good and punishes evil, not only in this world, but also in the next? Momentous questions, indeed! Don't you think it worth your while to try to find an answer to them? Or is it true that it is impossible to find and give an answer to this question? There are people who claim that man does not know, and cannot know, whether there is a God. They call themselves agnostics. Is it true, is it possible, that this most important of all questions, which concerns man's present and future happiness and destiny, must remain unanswered? Surely, agnosticism is a dreary philosophy!

But perhaps the atheist, who denies the existence of God, is happy in his belief? He does not have to worry about his sins and their guilt, about God's anger on account of them, about his fate in the next world; for all these things do not exist for him. He knows that he is living for this earth only, and so he enjoys all the pleasures he can, and when death overtakes him, he meets it fearlessly, knowing that it will end all for him. But does he know this? Ah, there's the rub! Said a farmer in Ohio who was an in-

fidel: I don't *believe* that there is a God, but I would give my best team of horses to *know* that there is none." And that is the predicament of all atheists: they may believe, or profess to believe, that there is no God, but they cannot be certain of it. There is too much evidence against the truth of their belief.

The Voice of Conscience.—There is, first of all, the voice of their own conscience. Conscience is that voice in man which tells him that there is a God who rewards good and punishes evil, and which approves when he obeys its dictates and reproves him when he disobeys them. This voice of the conscience every man carries in his bosom, and therefore every man, also the avowed atheist, knows naturally that there is a God, and he cannot help being disquieted by the thought at times.

Now that this voice of conscience is not something acquired or awakened by a man's education or surroundings, but is innate in every man's heart, is proved especially by the fact that it is possessed even by the heathen, who have never received a revelation of God. Why is it that all heathen, not only the civilized ones, like the ancient Babylonians and Greeks and Romans, but even the most degraded savages, still have a faint idea of right and wrong, and, above all, that they still believe in the existence of some god or gods, and worship these in some fashion or other, in order to gain their favor and to appease their anger? The only explanation for this is, that they have something within them that tells them these things, something that they can never lose entirely, even though it has be-

come sadly perverted and corrupted. Thus the heathen are the strongest possible proof for the fact that all men know by nature that there is a God.

The Voice of Creation.—The second great evidence against the assertion of the atheist is the voice of creation. Where does the earth come from? Who made the great universe of which our earth is but an infinitesimal part? There is nothing which we come in contact with here on this earth of ours but has its designer and maker. Must not the whole earth and the whole universe, then, have *also* had a designer and maker? Athanasius Kirchner, a famous German astronomer, who was a devout Christian, had a friend who doubted the existence of God. One day this friend paid Kirchner a visit, and since the latter appeared to be busy, he spent his time looking at the astronomical instruments in the room. Among them was also a beautiful globe. He asked Kirchner whether it belonged to him, who had made it, etc. The latter replied that it did not belong to him, that he did not know whence it came, that nobody had made it, as far as he knew, and that it must have gotten there all of its own accord. His friend at first thought the great scientist was merely jesting, but when the latter reiterated his statements with apparent seriousness, he became vexed and reproached Kirchner with making sport of him. Thereupon the astronomer said to him: "What? Do you refuse to believe that this little miniature globe came into existence of its

own accord? And still you profess to believe that its great original has no Creator?"

And as the very existence of the universe proves the existence of a *mighty* Creator, so its wise arrangement postulates a *wise* Maker. Where shall I begin, and where shall I end, in speaking of the wonderful harmony with which all the manifold parts of the great universe work together, like the wheels of an intricate mechanism? The bare mention of a few examples must suffice. Suppose, for instance, that the sun, from which we receive our heat and light, had not been placed at just the proper distance from our earth, what would be the result? If it were too near, everything would be scorched by its rays and its light would be so strong as to blind our eyes; if, on the other hand, it were too far away, the earth would be so cold that no vegetation and no animal life could exist on it. But it is just in the right position, and it must have been a wise hand that placed it there. Then what wonderful wisdom is displayed in the provision made for supplying the wants of all the countless millions of animals that inhabit this earth, and in endowing each one with an instinct which enables it to find its proper food. And lastly, what a wonderful creature is man, the "crown of creation," with his body "fearfully and wonderfully made," majestic and beautiful in design, every member peculiarly adapted for the purpose for which it is intended! Look, for example, at the human hand, with its thumb and four fingers, equally suited

for wielding the pen, for holding a book, for lifting a rock, for skimming over the keys of the piano, and for a thousand other purposes! Suppose, for instance, that the thumb had been left off—how that would have impaired the usefulness of the hand! Truly, it must be a wise Creator that designed the great universe.

And lastly, the wonders and beauties of nature prove the existence of a *perfect* Maker of the universe. In contemplating this subject, our mind is again bewildered by the multitude of wonders with which it is surrounded on every side. And in viewing them the imperfection of man and his work are brought vividly home to us. Thus the movements of the heavenly bodies proceed with absolute mathematical precision. Precisely on time the sun rises every morning and sets every evening; precisely on time it reaches the tropics every fall and spring. But where is the clock or watch, made by man's hand, that keeps exact time and never needs to be regulated? The figures on the wings of a butterfly are perfect in shape and symmetry, and the sting of a bee runs to a perfect point under the most powerful microscope. But the finest painting is full of blotches, the sharpest needle and the keenest razor appear blunt and coarse when seen through a magnifying glass.

A certain pastor chanced to pass the house of one of his parishioners one day, while she was hanging her clothes out on the line to dry. He was struck by the dazzling whiteness of her linen and complimented her on it. Not long after he passed the house again, soon after a snowfall, and again the woman was hanging

out her clothes. This time they did not appear nearly so white and clean to him, and he made a remark to her to this effect. But she replied, "You are mistaken, pastor. My linen is as white as when you saw it last time, but *who can compete with God Almighty's white?*" So it is—man's most perfect works are imperfect when compared with the perfect works of God. And the reason? Ah, man himself is imperfect, and so are his works; and so the Designer and Maker of nature's beauties and wonders must be as perfect as these His works are perfect.

Now, in view of all these arguments for the existence of God, does not the cause of the professed atheist appear rather desperate? Can it be that in spite of all these proofs, and many others upon which we cannot enter here, a man can really be convinced that there is no God? It would indeed seem impossible!

Objections of Atheists.—But atheists also advance some arguments on their side, and in justice to them, we ought, perhaps, to hear at least the main one. They say: No one has ever seen God. He cannot be perceived by means of the senses, and we believe nothing that we cannot perceive in this manner. Well, suppose it were true that God had never manifested Himself to man in a manner perceptible to his senses, does that prove He does not exist? Not at all. At best it would prove that He is of such a nature as to be imperceptible to our senses. But to argue from our inability to perceive Him with our senses that God does not exist, is exactly the same as for a blind man to assert that there is no light and no

color, or for the deaf to deny the existence of sound, because these things are imperceptible to any of their senses. What matters it that we have never seen or heard or touched God? Does that prove that He does not exist? Have we fathomed the illimitable chambers of the universe? How, then, can we assert that He is nowhere to be seen, or heard, or felt? Says Bishop Chalmers: "To be able to say there is no God, we must walk the whole expanse of infinity, and ascertain, by observation, that trace of Him is to be found nowhere; that through every known and untrodden vastness in His illimitable universe there is no sign of His presence."

II.

THE DESTINY OF MAN.

What is the destiny of man? Does he live only for this world, or will he continue to exist after death? And will he meet with the reward of his deeds in the next world? Agnostics answer again: We don't know, and nobody else knows or can know. Those who deny the existence of God uniformly also deny the continued existence of man after death. Denying the existence of a just God who will punish their sins, they feel safe also in affirming that there is no future place either of punishment or of reward. Or perhaps the statement ought to be reversed: wishing to rid themselves of the terrible thought of a future retribution, they are forced to reject also the belief in an avenging God, "who is angry with the wicked every day."

Now they reason about this question very much in the same way as they do about the question whether there is a God. They say: Nobody has ever visited the other world and come back to us with tidings from those regions. None of those who die ever return to tell us that there is a hereafter. We ourselves have never seen that world, or received other tangible proofs of its existence. What evidence, then, have we that could induce us, or compel us, to believe in its existence? It is the same

story over again: the blind man refusing to admit the existence of light and color, and the deaf man asserting that there can be no sound. A story is told of an unbeliever who said to a Christian friend of his, "You say you believe that man has an immortal soul?" "I do." "Well, did you ever see a soul?" "No, sir." "Did you ever smell a soul?" "No." "Did you ever taste a soul?" "No." "Did you ever feel a soul?" "Yes, thank God, I did." "Well, you see, there are four witnesses against one, and it seems to me that your belief rests upon a rather precarious foundation." Now came the Christian's turn. "Did you ever see a pain?" he asked the skeptic. "No, I never did," this one had to concede. "But no doubt you have often heard a pain?" "No." "Perhaps you have smelled one, then?" "No." "And haven't you tasted one, either?" "No." "Did you ever feel one?" "I certainly did." "You see there are four against one here also. And yet that one sense of feeling is sufficient to convince you that there is really such a thing as pain. Why, then, should it not be sufficient to convince me that I have an immortal soul when I feel its presence in my body every day?" Yes, we Christians are persuaded that there is an immortal soul dwelling in our body, and unbelievers, too, could know its reality if they did not harden their hearts against this conviction. Their plea that we can have no tangible proof of the immortality of the soul and a life to come is disingenuous and untrue.

The Heathen's Belief in an Existence after Death.—Here, again, the strongest proof that the consciousness of the existence of the soul and a life beyond the grave is innate in man, is found in the fact that this consciousness exists among all the heathen nations. The Greeks and Romans had their tales of a "lower world," where the "shades," *i. e.*, the departed souls, had to be ferried across the Styx and then entered either the happy Elysian fields, or were consigned to dark Tartarus for punishment. The ancient Egyptians had their tribunal of Osiris, where the soul was tried in the scale of justice, and either welcomed to the companionship of good Osiris, or condemned to return to earth to be purified in the body of some animal, and, in the case of the incorrigibly wicked, consigned to the jaws of a monster for destruction. So our Teutonic forefathers had their "Valhalla," and the Indians of our continent their "happy hunting ground." What stronger proof than this could be asked for the fact that man is naturally conscious of the existence and immortality of the soul?

Man's Superiority over the Lower Animals.—But aside from this consciousness there are numerous and cogent considerations which cannot but make it appear at least probable to us that man was not, like the brute creation, made for this earth alone. If we compare man with the lower animals, what do we find? We find that he is far superior to them in every respect; yes, more, that there is an *essential* difference between him and them. This essential differ-

ence between man and beast, this great and wonderful superiority of the former over the latter, certainly points to something nobler, higher in his destiny. Or can it be true that man, the noblest, highest, and most perfect of all visible living creatures, is, after all, no better than the brutes? that he lives for this earth alone, that he dies like the beast of the field, and his carcass, given to corruption and eaten by worms, is all that is left of him?

Man's Superiority in Beauty and Nobility of Body.—Now, in considering the differences between man and beast, we notice, in the first place, that he differs from the lower animals already in his body. Man's body is incomparably more beautiful in appearance than theirs. How gracefully his limbs and his whole body are shaped! How beautiful his face and how full of expression! One needs only to look at him to see that he is an intelligent being, for intelligence bursts from his eyes and is expressed in all the features of his face. Compare man's appearance with that of any of the lower animals, even of the one that comes nearest to him in outward shape, and to which, therefore, some people would trace his descent —how incomparably superior, indeed, is man to each and every one of them! And one point we must note here in particular; man is the only living being on this earth that stands and walks upright on his feet and carries his head upward. All other creatures, the monkey not excepted, walk on all fours and assume a prostrate position, carrying their heads inclined

towards the ground. Is not this very posture of man an indication that, while the brutes are intended for this earth alone, he is not made to grovel here below, but is destined for something better, nobler, higher? And as man's appearance differentiates him from the animals, so he is also superior to them in this respect, that his wants are greater and his tastes more refined than theirs, in regard to food and clothing and shelter for his body. And now, after contemplating these great differences, shall we still attempt to persuade ourselves that man is on a level with the beasts? that, like them, he lives for this world alone and that his life, like theirs, is snuffed out forever by death? Shall not this contemplation rather move us, as it did that pious man, who, on beholding a toad in a meadow, burst into tears because he had never thanked his Creator for having made him such a noble, beautiful being and not such an ugly, deformed creature like the one at his feet?

Man Alone Is a Rational Creature.—But a still greater and more important difference between man and the lower animals is to be found in the fact that of all living creatures on this earth man alone is a rational being. Animals have an instinct, and this faculty of theirs is often so acute and so wonderful that it excites our admiration and astonishment. But man alone has reason, an intelligent mind. He alone can think, reason, argue, draw conclusions, solve mathematical problems, and perform other feats that are characteristic of, and belong to,

a rational mind. No matter how acute may be the instinct of any animal, it can do none of the things just mentioned. Its instinct is merely a mechanical intuition, while man's reason is an independently working thinking-apparatus. There is an essential and world-wide difference between the two. And so it also naturally follows that there are certain manifestations of this reasoning faculty of which man alone is capable. For instance, man alone is capable of intelligent speech. Certain birds can be taught to utter a few words; but where is the parrot or magpie that can master a language? All that can possibly be taught them is to utter a few phrases mechanically. And so man alone can also be taught to read and write, he alone is capable of undergoing a course of training and instruction, of acquiring knowledge, of learning an art, of mastering a trade, etc. All that animals can be taught, even in doing certain work or performing tricks, is merely mechanical on their part. Man alone can study, work, perform intelligently. Is not this mental superiority of man over all animals another strong proof that he is essentially above them, that he is a higher, nobler being, and that also his destiny must therefore be a higher one?

Man's Moral Character.—But above all, man is a moral being. He is only one of all the living creatures on this earth that knows the difference between right and wrong. He is the only one who knows that virtue and goodness

is rewarded, and that vice and wickedness entail punishment. He alone has a conscience which tells him what he ought to do, and what he ought to leave undone, and that warns him of the inevitable consequences of his wrong-doing, both here and hereafter. The existence of this faculty in man everywhere and at all times is shown, *e. g.*, by the orderly organization of society among all races. Everywhere we find the two great institutions that distinguish human society from the brute creation, to-wit, the Family and the State. The lower animals all propagate promiscuously. Even where there is such a thing as mating among them, this lacks entirely the moral aspect, and so bears no resemblance to the life-long union of man and woman in marriage. And how wonderful that this institution of matrimony exists among all human races, no matter how degraded and savage they may be. It is true, alas, that it is often corrupted and perverted, but it is found everywhere. To what is this traceable but to the fact that man, even in the most degraded condition, is still a moral being, with at least a remnant of a conscience in his breast? And, again, man alone, of all living creatures, everywhere lives under some form of government. Even the savages have their chiefs who govern them in times of peace and lead them into battle in times of war. Now it is true that we sometimes also find a kind of leadership among animals. But there is an essential difference between that and human

governments. With them, it is simply submission to the stronger and most cunning. Here, too, we miss entirely and absolutely the moral aspect which plays such an important part in all human forms of government. There is no punishment of crime, no reward of merit among animals. That is found among men alone, for man alone is a moral being, endowed with the power of distinguishing between right and wrong. And shall we still say that man is no better than the beasts, and that his destiny is the same as theirs?

III.

IS THE BIBLE THE WORD OF GOD?

God has revealed Himself to man in nature. The universe tells man that there must be a mighty, wise, and perfect Being who made it. God also reveals Himself to man by the voice of conscience, which tells him that there is a just God who punishes evil and rewards good, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. Now in addition to these two natural sources of information concerning the existence and attributes of God and the destiny of man there is a third one. There is a book which claims to be a revelation from God, indeed, which says that it is the Word of God, given by God Himself to man for the purpose of revealing to him much more concerning Himself, His essence and will, and man's relation to Him, than he can gather from the other two sources. That book is the Bible. Let us see, first, what it claims for itself.

The Bible Claims to Be the Word of God.—In Isaiah 34, 16 we read: "Seek ye out of the *book of the Lord,* and read. No one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate; for my mouth it hath commanded, and His Spirit it hath gathered them." And Paul says, Rom. 3, 2, that to the Jews, during the Old Testament, "were committed the *oracles of God.*" Thus both the Old and the New Testaments testify of the former that it is the Word of

God. And in like manner the New Testament frequently speaks in a general, comprehensive way of the "Word of God," evidently including under this term not only the Old Testament, but also itself. Thus Paul exhorts the Ephesian Christians to "take the sword of the Spirit, which is the *Word of God,*" in their warfare against their spiritual enemies (Eph. 6, 17). And the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that "the *Word of God* is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." (Hebr. 4, 12).

That this refers not only to the Old, but also to the New Testament, is evident from the fact that the authors of both Testaments are credited with the same manner of producing their books. For the Bible also explains in what way, although written by men, it is the Word of God; its writers tell us that they were told by God Himself what to write. Thus David says of himself, Ps. 45, 1, that his "tongue is the pen of a ready writer," and Christ Himself, in the New Testament, tells who is this "ready writer," when He says, Matt. 22, 43, that David wrote the Psalms "in the Spirit." So it was the Spirit of God that used David as His "pen" in writing the Psalms. In like manner almost every one of the Old Testament prophets begins his book of prophecies with an affirmation that the Lord is speaking through him. Thus Isaiah, the first of the prophets, begins: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for *the Lord* hath spoken." And the book of Malachi, the last of the prophets, is "the burden of *the Word of the Lord* to Israel by Malachi." And

the New Testament says of all the writers of the Old Testament that they were thus moved by the Spirit of God. Thus Paul writes, 2 Tim. 3, 16, that "all Scripture is given *by inspiration of God;*" and Peter says (2 Pet. 1, 20. 21) that "holy men of God"—not some, but holy men in general—"spake as they were *moved by the Holy Ghost.*" And of himself and the other writers of the New Testament Paul affirms (1 Cor. 2, 13): "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but *which the Holy Ghost teacheth.*"

Let these few quotations, which might be multiplied so as to fill page upon page, suffice. They amply prove that the Bible does indeed lay claim to being the Word of God. But now, does the Bible make good this claim? Or is it, as many assert, merely a human book, devoid of supernatural qualities, and, like other books, full of inaccuracies? Let us see!

The Inerrancy and Harmony of the Bible.—In the first place, the Bible proves its divine character by its freedom from errors. It is, indeed, one of the standing objections raised by unbelievers against the Bible, that it is full of mistakes and contradictions and hence cannot be the Word of God. Generally this objection is made in ignorance. I myself recently encountered an infidel who urged this objection. But when I asked him to point out the contradictions, he began to hem and haw. "He wasn't so well learned in these matters, but it would take him only a short while to find

plenty of them." I advised him to do so before repeating the charge. And if you, my friend, have hitherto been one of those who charge the Bible with contradictions and errors, I advise you, likewise, to go and examine the Bible carefully, and to include in this examination not only the reading of infidel literature with its one-sided presentation of the matter, but also the careful perusal of some Christian apologetical writings, and see whether difficulties will not disappear as the mist before the sun. For that there are difficulties in the Bible no one will deny. But they were put there on purpose by God, in order to urge us to "search the Scriptures," and they can be, and have all been, satisfactorily explained, and no error or contradiction has yet been proved against the Bible by all its assailants.

An example or two will show how these "contradictions" and "mistakes" vanish when subjected to a close scrutiny. In Mark 2, 26, Christ says that David "went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar, the high priest," while in 1 Sam. 21, 1 and 22, 9, we are told that the priest's name was Ahimelech, the son of Ahiud, and that Abiathar was Ahimelech's son (1 Sam. 22, 20). The very simple explanation of this seeming contradiction is, that each one of these men had several names, as is evident from the following passages: 2 Sam. 8, 17; 1 Chron. 18, 16; 24, 6, where Ahimelech's *father* is called Abiathar (Ahimelech's father, then, is the high priest to whom Christ refers!); 1 Sam. 14, 3, where the

same man is called Ahia; 1 Chron. 18, 16, where Ahimelech is called Abimelech. Mark tells us in his Gospel (ch. 15, 25): "And it was the third hour and they crucified Him," while John says (ch. 19, 14) that "about the sixth hour" of the same day Jesus was still at the judgment-hall of Pilate. Again the simple explanation is, that John counts from midnight and Mark from sunrise, both of which modes of reckoning were then in vogue. Manifestly this places the "sixth hour" of John earlier than the "third hour" of Mark. These few instances will doubtless be sufficient to show on what flimsy ground the infidels' objections to the Bible rest. Let me beseech you again: If these things have been troubling you, listen not only to the side of the infidels, but also to the other side. These seeming mistakes and contradictions can *all* be satisfactorily explained.

And now, when we consider that the Bible was written by about forty writers coming from all ranks and conditions, and living scattered over a period of 1,600 years, must we not confess that this wonderful harmony is an incontrovertible proof for the divine origin of their writings?

The Prophecies of the Bible.—But the most wonderful feature of this harmony of the Bible is the agreement between its prophecies and their fulfillment. The prophecies of the Bible are unique in their character; they foretold future events, often happening hundreds, even thousands of years after the prophecies were

made, and all of them of such a nature that they could not have been calculated nor even surmised beforehand. Astronomers can foretell an eclipse long before it occurs, because the heavenly bodies move according to fixed laws, and having determined these laws, they can know just exactly how these bodies will move in the future. Sometimes men, by shrewdly weighing the probabilities, can also surmise certain future events, and so they may at times foretell such events before they occur. But the events foretold by the Bible prophecies hundreds and thousands of years before, could neither be calculated by any fixed laws of nature nor deduced from any circumstances pointing towards their future happening. Let us but cast a brief glance at the most important class of its prophecies, the Old Testament promises of the coming Messiah, or Savior. We are told about Him that He is to be born of a virgin (Is. 7, 14), of the house of David (Jer. 23, 5. 6), at Bethlehem (Micah 5, 2), at the time when the Jews should have lost their independence (Gen. 49, 10); then we are told that He is to die a painful and ignominious death (Is. 53), to be betrayed by one of His own disciples (Ps. 41, 9; John 13, 18), ridiculed and tortured by His enemies (Ps. 22, 7. 13), nailed to the cross (Ps. 22, 16), given vinegar to drink (Ps. 69, 21), robbed of His clothes (Ps. 22, 18), that He should rise again (Ps. 16, 10) and finally ascend to heaven (Ps. 47, 5). Now all these prophecies, and many more like them, were fulfilled to the letter in

Christ. Jacob, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, could not have foretold these things from their own knowledge. No; there is only one possible explanation; a Higher Being who knows the future must have used them as His instruments in foretelling all these things.

It is sometimes objected that the prophecies were written after the fulfillment; or if they were actually written during the time of the Old Testament, the story of Christ's life in the Gospels is a clever fabrication, the details of which were purposely adapted to the prophecies. Can any one really entertain these objections seriously? The first is sufficiently disproved by the one historical fact that a Greek translation of the books of the Old Testament—the so-called Septuagint—was made as early as the third and second centuries before Christ at Alexandria in Egypt. And then, what of the prophecies of the New Testament which have been fulfilled since it was written and are still in process of fulfillment? Will any one affirm that these were also written after their fulfillment? An infidel was airing his views before a company, and in the course of the conversation also mentioned the above objection. A preacher who was present said to him: "Sir, I know at least one prophecy that could not have been written before its fulfillment: 'There shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts.' I leave it to the rest to say whether the fulfillment is not taking place a long time after the

prophecy in this case." The second objection, that the New Testament history has been purposely adapted to the Old Testament prophecies, scarcely merits any notice. Is it conceivable that it would have been possible for the writers of such a "history" to palm off their fabrications as genuine, without being at once denounced as impostors by their contemporaries? Now it is a significant fact that none of the Jewish or Gentile writers of those days whose writings have come down to us impugn the truthfulness of the Gospel narrative. It may certainly be taken for granted that these writers, who entertained a deadly hatred toward Christianity, would have raised this charge if there had been any possibility of sustaining it.

The Authenticity of the Scriptures.—In this connection it will be interesting to note that the Scriptures are better authenticated than any other book of antiquity now extant. In the first place, no other book approaches the sacred writings in the number of manuscripts. To give a few examples:

Of the plays of Æschylus there are fifty manuscripts in existence, of Sophocles nearly one hundred, but only seven are of independent value; of Catullus but three have come down to us, and these are all from a single manuscript of the fourteenth century. Euripides, Cicero, and Virgil have more, but not one — not even Virgil, who has the most manuscripts—equals the books of the New Testament, which in Greek alone number three

thousand copies and multiply to twelve thousand if we include ancient translations.

The second particular which especially affects the genuineness of a given alleged ancient manuscript is its remoteness from the date of its author. In this respect again the New Testament far exceeds all classical manuscripts. The earliest manuscript of Sophocles is of a date 1,400 years after his death, of Horace 900 years after his death. Virgil alone approaches the New Testament in this, but even the earliest manuscript of Virgil is of the fourth century, a little over 300 years after his death in 8 B. C. The manuscripts of the New Testament are not more than from 250 to 300 years after the death of their authors.

Again, if we examine that very strong evidence of authenticity for an ancient manuscript, its quotations or citations in other manuscripts, we shall find the Scriptures cited much oftener than any classical manuscript. Homer, the bible of the Greeks, is mentioned only six times by the historian Herodotus, living four hundred years after. Thucydides is scarcely mentioned at all for the same period. The *Annals* of Tacitus are not mentioned directly for 1,400 years after their composition.

Contrast with these the innumerable citations of the Scriptural manuscripts so early in date after their first production and so numerous as to make it impossible to give detailed figures. To mention only one example: The first epis-

tle of John is quoted by Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who was a pupil of St. John. No classical manuscript known to us can approach this in earliness of quotation. And yet the writings of almost all the secular writers of antiquity are universally accepted as genuine, while the authenticity of the Biblical records is often called into question.

The Grandeur of the Bible.—Critics of all times and nations, even professed enemies of Christianity, concede that the Bible is the grandest and noblest literary monument of the world. Take only this testimony of Rousseau, the brilliant French philosopher: "I confess that the majesty of the Bible fills me with astonishment, and that the sacredness of the Gospel appeals to my heart. Look at the books of the philosophers with all their pomp, how little are they when compared with the Bible. Can a book which is at the same time so sublime and so simple be the work of men?" Yes, even from a literary viewpoint the Bible is the greatest book that was ever written. The sweet, touching poetry of the Psalms, the majestic flights of Isaiah, the logic of Paul, the tenderness of John, above all, the wonderful simplicity and incisiveness of the sermons and parables of Christ: where have they been equaled? Read the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5—7), the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), a chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the 23d Psalm. Can you imagine anything more beautiful and sub-

lime? And then, compare with these selections from the Bible a Sura from the Koran, the sacred book of the Mohammedans, which also claims to be of divine origin; or any of the other sacred books of the East, or the "inspired" Book of Mormon, the bible of the Latter-Day Saints. The vapidity of these books contrasted with the beauty and majesty of the Bible cannot but impress you with the divine, superhuman character of the Book of books.

IV.

THE GOD OF THE BIBLE.

The Bible is the Word of God, and in this Word of His, God has revealed Himself to man. For although man knows, without such a revelation, that there is a God; although both the voice of conscience and of creation teach him this and urge him to find God, thus rendering him "without excuse" (Rom. 1, 20): yet natural religion cannot by itself teach man who the true God is, nor how he can establish the right relation between himself and God. "The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone." The nations which have been left to their own devices have, without exception, fallen into the grossest forms of idolatry and to the lowest depths of moral degradation. Now, that man may know the true God, He has revealed Himself to him in the Bible. That was His purpose in having this Book written. Who, then, is the God of the Bible?

The Unity of God.—There is only one God. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, is one Lord" (Deut. 6, 4). "There is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2, 5). Most heathen nations worship a great multitude of gods. Their foolish imagination created a special god for everything they met with in their experience. But the Bible knows of only one God,

one Maker and Lord of heaven and earth, to whom we owe our being and to whom we are responsible.

The Trinity of God.—But in this God there are three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, distinct the one from the other, and yet one in essence and inseparable; none of them greater than the other, but all three equal in power and majesty; none of them prior in rank or time, but all three equally exalted and eternal. The most explicit revelation of the Trinity we have in the scene enacted after Christ's baptism, where the three persons manifested themselves. For the Father proclaims Christ His Son from heaven, and the Holy Ghost descends upon the latter in the form of a dove (Matt. 3, 16. 17). Another strong proof is the formula prescribed by Christ for Baptism: "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28, 19). The essential unity of the persons is emphasized by Christ, when He says: "I and my Father are one" (John 10, 30; 17, 11. 22). This oneness of essence also necessarily implies that the three persons are equal in all respects, that none is the first, none the last. And when we speak of the Father as the first, the Son as the second, and the Holy Ghost as the third person, the terms first, second, and third are used in respect to order and source, not in respect to time, degree, or dignity; for the Son is begotten of the Father from eternity (Ps. 2, 7), and the Holy Ghost proceeds

from eternity from the Father and the Son (John 15, 26; Rom. 8, 9).

The Essence of God.—God is a spiritual being, *i. e.*, He has no flesh and body as we have. "God is a Spirit," says His own Son (John 4, 24). That is why we cannot see and hear and touch Him, for a spirit is invisible, intangible, imperceptible to the senses. The Scriptures indeed sometimes speak of God as having a hand, an arm, an eye, etc. But in this they merely adapt themselves to our human manner of thinking. They also tell us about God's appearing repeatedly to men in visible form, but such forms were merely assumed by God, in order to make it possible for Himself to commune visibly with men, and *vice versa.*

The Majesty of God.—"Our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat" (Ps. 115, 3—7). What stronger parallel than this could be drawn to illustrate the majesty of the living, all-powerful God of the Bible, who by His Word made the heavens and the earth, as compared with the lifeless, powerless idols of the heathen, made by man's hands! And where heathen nations have not sunk so low as to worship fetishes or animals, where they still retained the belief

in some superhuman beings who ruled the universe, as, for instance, the ancient Greeks and Romans, yet what caricatures of divinity were their gods! Take the gods of the Greeks, the most cultured of all ancient races. They were simply overgrown men, possessing all the frailties and vices and passions of men, but in an exaggerated degree. They were liars, thieves, adulterers, they plotted and conspired against, and quarreled with, one another. The poet Pope has well described the moral character of these deities in his two terrible lines:

> Gods changeful, partial, passionate, unjust,
> Whose attributes were rage, revenge, and lust.

What comparison is there between these profligate, vicious, passionate gods of the Greeks and the pure, holy just God of the Bible! Read of the majesty and grandeur of this God in such passages as these: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . . . And God said, Let there be . . . and there was . . ." (Gen. 1). "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God" (Ps. 90, 1. 2). "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord" (Jer. 23, 23. 24). "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory"

(Is. 6, 3). Here, and in countless other passages of Scripture, God is described as infinite in power, knowledge, and in every other quality of His essence. And, moreover, we are taught that the glory of His appearance is so great that no sinful man can look upon His face and live; that even the pure and holy seraphim, while chanting their "Thrice Holy" before His throne, cover their faces with their wings to shield their eyes from His blinding glory (Exod. 33; Is. 6). Probably the grandest work of art ever executed by the hand of man was the statue of Zeus at Olympia in Greece. It was sixty feet tall, was constructed entirely of ivory and gold and precious stones. So magnificent was this statue that the Greeks considered it a great misfortune for any one to die without having seen it. But what was the glory of this most beautiful of heathen idols compared with the glory of Him, before whom the Seraphim cover their faces, and a mere glance of whose countenance would destroy a sinful man?

The Love of God.—"God is love" (1 John 4, 8). God not only *has* love, but He *is* love. Love constitutes His very essence, and His every deed therefore has its source in love. It was His infinite love that moved God to create the world, in order that there might be beings beside Himself upon whom He could lavish the bounties of His love. Again, it was His incomprehensible love that caused Him to create man in His own image, sinless and pure, for a life of undisturbed happiness in this

world, and for a life of endless bliss in the world to come.

Then man fell and turned his back upon his loving Creator and became His enemy; he transgressed the command of his Maker and brought His just wrath and punishment down upon his head; he rejected the happiness for which God had designed him, and plunged himself into temporal misery and eternal ruin. But even then God continued to love him; even then He did not abandon him to his fate. "When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live! Yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live!" (Ez. 16, 6). These words of the Lord spoken to rebellious Jerusalem apply equally to the whole rebellious world. And this love prompted Him to devise a way of rescuing this world lost in sin from its self-incurred ruin, of reconciling His enemies to Himself, and making it possible for them to enter the heaven from which they had excluded themselves. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3, 16). Could love be greater than that which prompted the Father to give up His only Son for His enemies? Truly, yes; "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5, 8).

O wondrous Love! what hast Thou done!
The Father offers up His Son,
The Son, content, descendeth!
O Love! O Love! how strong art Thou!
In shroud and grave Thou lay'st Him low
Whose word the mountains rendeth!

O wondrous Love, to bleed and die,
To bear the cross and shame,
That guilty sinners such as I
Might plead Thy gracious name!

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V.

CHRISTIANITY VERSUS UNBELIEF.

1. *Is Unbelief Rational?*

Infidels boldly declare they will not believe anything they cannot understand. For this reason they brand Christianity as irrational and, therefore, unworthy of acceptance. Let us see whether their claim is well founded. Is Christianity irrational, and is unbelief rational?

Let us take up the last question first. Unbelief, when carried to its consistent conclusion, becomes atheism and denies the existence of God. If there is anything unreasonable, surely it is this assertion, "There is no God." Everything in this world has a cause, an author, a maker. It is unthinkable, therefore, that the universe as a whole should have no maker, when reason proves that everything with which we come into contact must have one. The greatest thinkers of all times have recognized this. The late Lord Kelvin, by common consent the foremost physicist of his time, said: "The atheistic idea is so nonsensical that I do not see how I can put it into words." Again: "Science positively affirms creating and directive power, which it compels us to accept as an article of belief."

Dismissing without further consideration, therefore, the foolish assumption of atheism, that this great universe has no Creator, let us for a moment look at the plight in which it

finds itself with reference to *the government of the universe.*

If there is no God, no supreme intelligent Being, in control of the world, then there is only one alternative: this world is governed either by chance or by blind fate. But neither one of these fits in with the facts.

Suppose that chance ruled the world. Then there could be no such thing as law and order in nature. Everything would be topsy-turvy. The condition of things that must then prevail is well illustrated by the parable of Todd, who tells of a man that was dissatisfied with God and the laws of nature laid down by Him, and who one night found himself in a dream in the world of chance. There he saw men with their heads next to their feet, with their ears on their shoulders, their eyes on top of their heads, etc. Trees grew sometimes with their roots in the air and the branches in the ground, so that holes had to be dug into the earth in order to get the fruit. One year a tree would bear apples, another year the same tree would bear cucumbers, and a third, potatoes. It all depended upon chance. Sometimes the sun would set at noon, and perhaps it would be gone for weeks or months, perhaps it would return in a few minutes. Sometimes it would be so far away that Arctic cold would prevail, and then again it would be so close that everything would be scorched. It all depended on chance. It is needless to say that the man was glad when he awoke to find that not chance, but God, still governed the universe.

On the other hand, *suppose that a blind fate,*

or necessity, ruled the world. If that were the case, then there must be a monotonous sameness and regularity in the phenomena of nature. Then rain and sunshine, wind and weather would have to be as regular as clockwork; in short, everything in nature must run in unvarying and unchangeable ruts. As a matter of fact, while nature is governed by certain laws, there is endless variety in all the phenomena of nature. And that in the midst of this boundless variety the laws of nature are still upheld, that not confusion, but order prevails, that, *e. g.,* one part of the earth does not get all the sunshine and another all the rain; all this proves that neither blind chance nor unbending necessity, but an intelligent, wise God is ruling the world. And it proves that infidelity, which would deny the existence of God, is utterly unreasonable and foolish.

One more point we wish to touch upon briefly in this connection: *Unbelief denies an existence after this life and a retribution for sin in another world.* Now this, too, is unreasonable. That crime and sin inevitably brings its punishment, no one will or can deny who does not close his eyes to the ordinary events of life. Not only are jails and gallows indispensable for the restraint of criminals and the protection of society, but it is a law of nature that sin and vice brings punishment and misery. The drunkard undermines his health and dies of delirium tremens. The prostitute and whoremonger contract the most loathsome and horrible diseases. "The way of the transgressor is hard." But not all sins find their just retri-

bution in this life. Many murderers go unhanged, and many dishonest men amass wealth, and live and die respected. If this world ends man's career, then many wrongs go unrighted and many sins unpunished. Is it not unreasonable, then, to affirm that there is no life after this, in which every misdeed shall find its due penalty?

2. The Reasonableness of Faith.

Unbelievers, as we have seen, like to boast that they accept and believe only what they can comprehend with their understanding and perceive with their senses, and one of the chief objections that they offer to the Christian religion is, that it asks us to take everything on faith. This is a very specious plea and appeals very strongly to the natural disposition of man. But it does not hold water. Just as little as unbelief and atheism is in conformity with reason, just so little is true religion contrary to it.

Faith is a necessary condition in every sphere of life and activity. Without faith or trust or confidence, call it what you choose, it would be simply impossible to carry on the business of the world. Men conduct their daily business and risk their property and their lives every hour on half knowledge. Suppose a man is going on a voyage to Europe. Does he first examine the ship upon which he is about to embark; does he go all over her with a hammer and tap every bolt and rivet to see whether she is seaworthy? Does he put the captain through an examination to judge of his knowledge of ships and of navigation? Does he make

an independent investigation to see whether the nautical charts are correct? Why no, he takes all these things for granted. He knows that the vessel belongs to a good company, that the captain is an experienced sailor, that the charts have been tested time and again, and so he feels reasonably safe in assuming that he will reach his destination. He has *faith* in the ship-company, the captain, and the charts, and on this faith he is willing to entrust his life to their keeping.

And so it is in a thousand other things. Business is built on faith. Now, as a matter of fact, faith, or trust, is often misplaced and shamefully abused and deceived. Men are often cheated in business. The confidence that we repose in our friends is often betrayed. Still men continue to trust one another, and nobody would think of considering every one else a thief, or liar, or impostor. No infidel considers such faith in his fellow-men unreasonable. Why, then, should it be unreasonable to take things on faith in the true religion? Can unbelievers bring examples to show that faith here is ever misplaced, as it is so often sadly misplaced in our dealings with our fellow-men? Has God ever cheated or proved false to His promises? Should we not trust Him if we are ready to trust men?

But infidels object: Christianity asks us to believe things that we cannot understand, that are contrary to our reason. Where faith is asked of us in business and the everyday affairs of life, it deals with matters that are continually verified by experience. But religious

matters, such as the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, we have no means of verifying. It is unreasonable to ask us to believe on such conditions.

It is not true, in the first place, that we are asked to believe religious matters without proof. Reason and conscience both testify to the existence of God and a life after death. Moreover, Christianity has proved its truth many thousand times, and is still proving it to-day by its wonderful power of reforming and bettering the world. But of this we shall have more to say when we come to compare it with other religions. A mere allusion to the fact in this connection will suffice to show that Christianity does not ask a blind acceptance of its teachings without verification.

Now, as for the other part of the objection, that many things in religion are contrary to reason and therefore unworthy of belief. How many things are there in the realm of nature that appear diametrically opposed to all laws of reasoning, and that we are yet asked to believe! For instance, science teaches us that our earth is a ball, that it is suspended in space and revolves around the sun. Who can understand how it is possible for all the people living scattered over all parts of this globe to bear their heads upward? Does not reason tell us that on a portion of it they must be hanging down? Who can understand how it is possible for this earth to rotate on its axis at the rate of about 17 miles per minute without flinging everybody and everything on its surface into space by what is called "centrifugal force"? how it can revolve around the sun

at the rate of a thousand miles a minute? All these things are utterly incomprehensible, utterly unreasonable, if you please. Yet no infidel denies them on that account. At least, I have never heard of one to date.

As a matter of fact, these things, if they are really true, are not opposed to reason, but simply lie beyond the reach of our ordinary experience. Nor does it make any difference whether we accept the Copernican or the Ptolemaic System; both of them involve us in equally great mysteries. And now, if there are things in nature that we cannot understand,—and those mentioned are not the only ones; as a matter of fact, we can understand very few things in nature,—how can we expect to fathom, with our reason, the spiritual, heavenly things with which religion deals? If there are so many things in the universe which seem unreasonable because they lie beyond our ordinary experience, how could we expect to fathom the nature of God, the great Creator of the universe? That we cannot understand how Three can be One and One can be Three, does not prove this to be untrue. It only proves that it is beyond our comprehension. Instead of being an argument against the truth of religion, it is rather an argument for it. That would be a queer God whom we limited creatures could comprehend with our finite intellect.

Almighty God! to Thee
  Be endless honors done,
The undivided Three,
  The great and glorious One!
Where reason fails, with all her powers,
There faith prevails and love adores.

VI.

CHRISTIANITY VERSUS OTHER RELIGIONS.

Christianity claims to be the only true and saving religion. It recognizes no other cult as being on equal footing, or of equal value, with itself. The modern spirit of liberalism which would have us believe that all religions, Christianity, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, etc., lead man to heaven only by different roads, has no foundation whatever in the Bible. Parliaments of religion, where Christians, Buddhists, Shintoists, and others meet on equal terms, are utterly foreign to the true spirit of Christianity. The modern slogan: "It makes little difference what you believe as long as you follow your conviction and try to do right," is a foolish delusion by which thousands deceive themselves and lose their immortal souls.

Christianity alone has the true God. "We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one" (1 Cor. 8, 4). "I am the Lord: that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Is. 42, 8). "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (First Commandment). The God of the Bible recognizes no other god beside Himself. He that worships any other god worships the devil. "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to the devils and not to God" (1 Cor. 10,

20). Those who have not this God of the Bible "have no hope and are without God in the world" (Eph. 2, 12).

This, then, includes not only the nations and religions of heathen countries, but also such cults as the Jewish, Mormon, Unitarian, Universalist, which are found in Christian countries, but which do not have the true God and are outside of Christianity, because they either deny the Trinity altogether, or refuse to accept Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. For "he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5, 12). "Whosoever abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John 2, 23). "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him" (John 5, 23).

Christianity alone teaches the true and only way of salvation. We can do no more here than to allude to this important subject, reserving a fuller treatment of it for a special chapter (see Chapter VII). Suffice it to say here that the Bible knows of only one way of salvation: faith in Christ and acceptance of his redemption. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved," but the name of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 4, 10—12). He that does not accept this Savior can have no salvation, and the religion that denies Him cannot lead its adherents to heaven. Christianity alone accepts Jesus as the Son of God

and the Savior of the world. Therefore Christianity is the only saving, the only true religion.

Christianity has demonstrated, and continues to demonstrate, its superiority over other religions by its power of reforming the individual and the world. The merits and demerits both of men and of governments are universally judged by the good they have accomplished, or by the evil they have done. And it is a legitimate criterion, in fact, it is the only correct one. Christianity challenges the world, in the words of its Founder: "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works" (John 8, 37. 38; 5, 36).

Nearly two thousand years ago, in an unknown village of an insignificant province of the Roman Empire, a child was born of humble parentage. For thirty years the carpenter's son of Nazareth lived with His foster-father in poverty and obscurity. Then He set Himself up as a reformer and as the promised Messiah of His nation. His own people rejected Him, and He died the death of a criminal on the cross. His disciples forsook Him and despaired of His cause. But He rose from the grave, and with their faith in His cause revived, His disciples went out into the world and proclaimed His name wherever they went. The powers of darkness conspired against the cause of the despised Nazarene and His followers. From the palace of the all but omnipotent Cæsars at Rome the decree went forth that the pernicious doctrine must be uprooted with fire and sword, and thousands

upon thousands of its adherents perished in the arena and at the stake. But the new doctrine, instead of being crushed, continued to spread, until it transformed the Roman Empire and was made its state religion. And it has kept up its victorious march through the centuries to this day, until now there is no country of the globe where its standard has not been raised. Whence does Christianity derive this power of conquering the world without force of arms, relying solely on the power of the Word? There is only one explanation for it: "The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God" (Rom. 1, 16).

Two thousand years ago the world was dying, morally and politically. The great Roman Empire was honeycombed with corruption. Its throne was occupied by monsters like Tiberius, Nero, Caligula. The attempts of the better emperors at stemming the tide were all in vain. Things were going from bad to worse. But strange to relate, the world is not dead to-day. Out of the decay and death of the Roman Empire new nations have arisen whose standards of law and humanity obey some strange upward impulse. What has wrought the marvelous change? What power has freed woman from the shameful degradation in which she is kept in almost all heathen countries? Who abolished the horrors of the Roman amphitheater, the cruelties of Roman slavery, and the oppression of mediæval serfdom? What has given us our free institutions of government, in short, almost all that is noble and prize-worthy in our present-day

civilization? There is only one possible answer: Christianity has been the chief agency to accomplish it! Let the infidel who dares deny this come forward and disprove the claim!

And the power of Christianity to transform the world and the individual is as vital to-day as it was two thousand years ago. Go and visit the islands of the South Sea. Fifty and less years ago they were inhabited by cannibals who slew their brethren and ate their flesh. To-day you find civilized people there, with schools and written languages and orderly governments. What has wrought the change? The missionaries of the Cross have gone there. No other power under heaven could have effected the transformation.

But we need not travel that far. Here at home, among ourselves, we can daily watch the transforming power of the Gospel. What happens, whenever a thief or a harlot or a drunkard are brought under the influence of the Gospel? The thief becomes honest; the harlot, chaste; the drunkard, sober. That is the effect of the Gospel, not in a few, not in many, but in all cases! Whence this wonderful transforming and reforming power? "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation," that is the only possible explanation for it.

And now, what have other religions accomplished towards the betterment of the world? What have Mohammedanism, Hinduism, and Buddhism done for Africa and Asia? Let Mohammedan countries answer with their polygamy and the consequent degradation of woman-

hood, with all the hideous cruelties and barbarities of slavery enthroned in them. Let India make reply, with its downtrodden womanhood and its suttees, where widows were burned alive with the corpses of their husbands. Let China answer, with its millions of women crippled for life by the torture of foot-binding, and its ponds, where to this day one can read the sign: "Do not drown girl babies here!" Such were the fruits of the religions prevailing in those countries, until Christianity entered them and began to overthrow these and other horrors. Who, in the face of all this, can continue to deny that Christianity has demonstrated, and is continuing to demonstrate, its unique character and its superiority over all other religions of the world by its wonderful power of transforming both the individual and the race?

VII.

OUR HOPE OF SALVATION.

1. The Necessity of Redemption.

All men are sinners. "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not" (Eccl. 7, 20); "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" (Prov. 20, 9); "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good; no, not one" (Ps. 14, 2. 3; compare Rom. 3, 10—12). "There is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3, 23). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1, 8). "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," *i. e.,* sinful (John 3, 6). There is no exception made in any of these passages. All men are born sinners, therefore all men are in need of redemption.

For God is righteous and punishes sin. Men frequently console themselves with the thought that God is such a loving and merciful Father that He could never consign any of His creatures to everlasting punishment. That is a false comfort, inspired by the "father of lies," and those who continue to live in sin, relying on the love and mercy of God, will rue their folly forever in anguish and despair of

hell. It is true that "God is love," that He is "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness" (1 John 4, 8; Ex. 24, 6). But it is equally true that He is holy and righteous, and for that reason cannot but punish sin. "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord, your God, am holy" (Lev. 19, 2). "The Lord, thy God, is a consuming fire, even a jealous God" (Deut. 4, 24). Therefore "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. 7, 11), and, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1, 18). Therefore also "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6, 23), and the terrible verdict of the great Judge upon the wicked at the end of the world will be: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (Matt. 25, 41). How, then, shall man escape this fearful doom which threatens him on account of his sin?

Man cannot atone for his own sin. That is another false comfort upon which many men build their hope of salvation, that by their own penitence, or self-chastisement, or good works they can atone for their sins and become worthy of heaven. But the Scriptures emphatically deny the possibility of salvation by man's own exertion. "By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2, 16; Rom. 3, 20). "A man is justified . . . without the deeds of the Law" (Rom. 3, 28). "No man is justified by the Law in the sight of God" (Gal. 3, 11). "By grace are ye saved . . . and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God:

not by works. lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2, 8. 9) "God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works" (2 Tim. 1, 9). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Tit. 3, 5). Surely, if it is possible to express anything in human language in such a manner that it cannot be misunderstood, then these passages teach beyond the possibility of contradiction that man cannot be saved by his own works, but that he must be saved in some other way if he is not to be lost eternally. What, then, is that way?

2. The Redeemer.

Because man could not be his own savior, therefore God provided a Savior for him. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3, 16). Out of love to a fallen and lost world, God sent His Son into the flesh to redeem man and again open heaven to him.

The Redeemer, then, must be a man.—Only a true man could redeem mankind; only a man could become the substitute for sinful men, and pay the penalty which the justice of God demanded for their sins. "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For, verily, He took not on Him the na-

ture of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham" (Hebr. 2, 14—16). "For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh" (that is to say, the Law could not save man, because sinful man could not fulfill it), "God, sending His own Son *in the likeness of sinful flesh,* and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom. 8, 3. 4).

But the Redeemer must also be a God. It was not enough for Him to be a true man. A mere man, even a holy, sinless man, could not have redeemed the fallen race. "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever:) that he should still live forever, and not see corruption" (Ps. 49, 6. 9). With all the riches of earth a man could not buy exemption for his brother from temporal death; how, then, should he, with any means at his disposal, purchase for him exemption from eternal death? And if he could not redeem one brother, how much less the numberless human race.

He who was to redeem the lost world must also be a true God. Only "the blood of Jesus Christ, *the Son of God,* cleanseth us from all sins" (1 John 1, 7); only because Jesus is "Christ *the Lord*" (*i. e.,* Jehovah, true God), could He also be the "Savior" (Luke 2, 11).

For sin, because it is an offense against the infinite justice of an infinite God, requires an infinite satisfaction. Such satisfaction, infinite in value, a mere man, who is a finite creature, could not achieve. Therefore the damned in hell, who will bear the penalty of their sins themselves, will have to suffer a punishment infinite in extent, because in all eternity they can never satisfy the infinite justice against which they have offended. Therefore our Redeemer must be not only a true man, but also true, eternal, infinite God, in order that He might be able to render a satisfaction of infinite value, sufficient to wipe out the guilt of all the countless sins of the whole human race and to satisfy the offended justice of God.

Only a divine-human Savior, then, could redeem us. Our Redeemer must be God and man in one person: man, in order that He could become man's substitute; God, in order that His substitution might satisfy God. Therefore "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son" (John 3, 16); therefore "The Word was made flesh" (John 1, 14); therefore, "when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law" (Gal. 4, 4. 5). Therefore, because Jesus Christ is both "true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary," could He be our Lord, who has redeemed us lost and condemned creatures. (See Luther's Explanation of the Second Article of the Creed.)

3. The Redeemer's Work.

Christ fulfilled the Law of God for man. "God sent forth His Son," we have seen, "made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law." Man was under the Law. "We know that what things soever the Law saith it saith to them *who are under the Law,* that *every mouth* may be stopped, and *all the world* may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3, 19). The world, man, was under the Law of God. It was his duty to fulfill all its commandments by a perfect obedience. But man cannot and does not fulfill the Law of God, for all men, as we have learned, are sinners, *i. e.,* transgressors of God's Law, and therefore "every mouth is stopped, and all the world is guilty before God."

Therefore it was a necessary part of the Redeemer's work to fulfill the Law in man's place. And so He did fulfill it, every jot and tittle of it. "Think not," He says Himself, "that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5, 17). And to John the Baptist, who hesitated when Christ asked to be baptized of him, He said: "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3, 15). And how perfect was His fulfillment of the Law is evidenced by the silence of His enemies in answer to His challenge: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8, 46), and by the fact that, in order to condemn Him, they were driven to the desperate expedient of manufacturing false testimony against Him (Matt. 26, 59).

Christ suffered the penalty of man's transgressions of the Law. Man had transgressed the Law and incurred its curse and penalty—the wrath of God, temporal death, and eternal damnation. To redeem man it was necessary, then, to appease God's wrath, to break the power of death, and to close the gates of hell. Christ suffered the punishment that God's justice demanded, He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2, 8). For "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6, 23), and "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebr. 9, 22). And thus "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3, 13); thus did He become "the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2, 2); thus did He "deliver us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1, 10); thus did He destroy the power of the devil (Hebr. 2, 14) and of death (v. 15; 1 Cor. 15, 55—57); thus did He close hell and open heaven. Redemption, then, is complete. All that remains is to put the sinner in possession of it.

4. The Application of Salvation.

God offers forgiveness of sins to the sinner for Christ's sake. Sin has been atoned for, and God's justice has been satisfied by Christ. Hence God can now, without violating His justice, forgive man's sins and let the sinner go unpunished; He can now be "just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3, 26). Nay, more, God cannot now

punish the sinner who has appropriated the righteousness of Christ, He must forgive his sin. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1, 9).

This forgiveness of sins God offers in the Gospel. There He invites sinners to partake of the bounties of His grace. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price!" (Is. 55, 1.) What are these dainties that are here offered without money and price? Listen again: "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even *the sure mercies of David*" (v. 3). And again: "I (Jesus) *am the root and the offspring of David*, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him that hear-eth say, Come! And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take *the waters of life* freely" (Rev. 22, 16. 17). The water of life, the sure mercies of David, the eternal salvation of the Son of David, that is what is offered free and without cost to the sinner in the Gospel. Sinner, will you not accept the gracious invitation and come? Lo, "all things are ready;" come and partake of the "great supper" (Luke 14, 16—24) which the King of heaven has prepared for you. Listen to the earnest pleading of Christ's messengers, the ministers of the Gospel: "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in

Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God!" (2 Cor. 5, 20.) Listen to Christ's own pleading in His Word: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11, 28).

Come to Calvary's holy mountain,
Sinners, ruined by the fall;
Here a pure and healing fountain
Flows to you, to me, to all;
In a full perpetual tide,
Opened when our Savior died.

He that drinks shall live forever:
'Tis a soul-renewing flood:
God is faithful; God will never
Break His covenant in blood,
Signed when our Redeemer died,
Sealed when He was glorified.

For the sinner must accept the forgiveness offered in the Gospel. It is true, God has absolved the world in Christ, and therefore sin no longer separates man from God. For "by the righteousness of one" (*i. e.*, of Christ) "the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom. 5, 18). But it is also true that the individual sinner has the power to reject this general pardon. Christ died for all (2 Cor. 5, 15); His redemption includes all, even the vilest sinners. But the sinner can exclude himself from its benefits by unbelief. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not!*" (Matt. 23, 37.)

Acceptance of the forgiveness of his sins is

necessary, then, on the part of the sinner. But acceptance—faith—is all that is necessary, too. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" was the anxious inquiry of the jailer at Philippi. And the answer of the apostles was: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16, 30. 31). And when the multitude on Pentecost asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter answered, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2, 37. 38). Through repentance and faith in Christ who died for your sins, and through the use of the means of grace, faith in your heart, you became a partaker of the great redemption of Jesus. No works of righteousness of your own (Tit. 3, 5), by which to become worthy, nothing whatever is necessary on your part to fit you for heaven; only accept what Jesus has done in your stead, and the gates of Paradise will swing open to admit you to its joys.

VIII.

REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION.

1. The Necessity of Repentance and Conversion.

In order to be saved, the sinner must repent of his sins and believe in the forgiveness of his sins, obtained for him by the Lord Jesus Christ, and offered to him through the Gospel. By repentance and faith he is converted. He is ushered into a new life. His heart and mind are changed. The Bible is insistent in its demand for this change. "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3, 2). "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13, 3). "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3, 3). Now, why is it that this call for repentance and conversion is so prominent throughout the Bible? that it is, in fact, made an indispensable condition for admission into the Church of God?

Man's nature is corrupt. At the beginning God created man "in His own image, after His own likeness" (Gen. 1, 26), *i. e.,* pure and without sin. But when Adam had fallen into sin, then he begat children "in his own likeness, after his image" (Gen. 5, 3). And since that day every human being is born in the sinful image of Adam. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3, 6). In consequence of this sinful birth, man's mind,

will, and reason, all the powers of his heart and soul in his natural state, are corrupted and turned towards evil, nor has he the least spark of power left to do or even to think anything that is good in the sight of God. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8, 21). Man's "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17, 19). He is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2, 1. 5); his "understanding is darkened," and he is "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart" (Eph. 4, 18). Man in his natural state is, therefore, an enemy of God and cannot obey His Law. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can be" (Rom. 8, 7). Hence man is also incapable of comprehending spiritual things. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2, 14). And on account of this utter corruption of his nature man is subject to God's wrath and worthy of eternal damnation. "We were by nature the children of wrath" (Eph. 2, 3).

Consequently a change of man's nature is necessary. Because man is by nature spiritually dead, he must be born again into a new spiritual life. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3, 3; compare Eph. 2, 5. 6; Col. 2, 13; 1 Pet. 1, 23; James 1, 18). Because the natural man is

spiritually blind, and "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," his "eyes must be opened," and he must be turned from darkness to light" (Acts 26, 18), and "God must give him repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Tim. 2, 25). Because man loves sin and hates God, he must be "turned from the power of Satan unto God;" he must "repent and turn to God" (Acts 26, 18. 20). In short, he must become a "new creature" (2 Cor. 5, 17; Gal. 6, 15); he must put off the "old man" and put on the "new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Col. 3, 10; Eph. 4, 24).

Without this change of man's nature there is no salvation. This demand of the Bible upon the sinner for repentance is distasteful to the sinner. For he is naturally secure and self-righteous and imagines he is fit for heaven. But let no such delusion deceive you, my dear friend! If you are still in your natural, unconverted, unregenerate state, then you are still in the kingdom and power of Satan, outside of the kingdom of Christ and God, under the wrath of God, and if you die without the change, you will lift up your eyes with Dives in hell. Therefore repent of your sin, turn from your evil ways, accept Christ and His salvation.

> Return, O wanderer, return!
> Thy Savior bids thy spirit live;
> Go to His bleeding feet, and learn
> How freely Jesus can forgive.

2. *Hasten, O Sinner, to Be Wise!*

The tendency of the sinner is to put off re-

pentance. When Paul reasoned with Felix of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come (Acts 24), then "Felix trembled," because his sins were brought home to him. But he smothered his conscience and put off repentance. "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee," he said to Paul. In like manner every sinner is tempted to defer repentance until a "convenient season." His sinful, corrupt heart naturally clings to this world with its pleasures and treasures. Sin tastes so sweet to it that he often finds it difficult to tear himself away. Besides, he knows that by doing so he will expose himself to the ridicule of his former associates, and perhaps to their hatred and persecution. And after all, why should he be in such a hurry about renouncing what is so dear to him in this life, he reasons with himself, when there is plenty of time? Why should he not enjoy his youth and the years of his manhood? When old age comes, with its hoary locks, and its serious years of reflection, when the pleasures of this earth shall have lost their power of attraction, then there will be time enough to give himself to God and to look out for the welfare of his soul in another world.

My friend, have I painted your picture in the foregoing? Beware, beware, lest by your procrastination you lose your soul. It is dangerous thus to put off your repentance, dangerous to trifle with the mercy and long-suffering of God! Now is the accepted time, now is your day of grace! You do not know how much longer it will last. God gives you

to-day. He has not promised to give you to-morrow and the next day. Death may come upon you unawares at any time. Dangers are lurking all about you. You cannot afford to delay repentance until old age or until your sickbed, because God may not vouchsafe you either. Several years ago the writer's oldest sister died. During her last illness, with but brief lucid intervals, her mind was clouded, and the sister who was with her during those sad days remarked to me afterwards: "How thankful we should be that we can feel assured that our sister was a Christian prior to her illness. For there would have been little opportunity for conversion on her death-bed." Now is the time of grace God has given you. He does not promise, and He does not owe it to you, to prolong it. If you fail to embrace it now and He suddenly cuts it off, your blood will be upon your own head.

And though God should not thus cut off your life without warning, though you should live many years longer, you could not afford to defer your repentance. We are not told in the Bible that Felix's "convenient season" ever came. And so yours may never come if you are delaying your repentance until such a time. To-day God is calling you, to-day His Spirit is striving with you. If you reject His call, if you grieve His Spirit, He may not call you again. He may withdraw His hand from you and give you over into obduracy and to a reprobate heart. It is true, there is forgiveness for the greatest sinner and the possibility of conversion for the vilest criminal up to the

hour of his death. But to presume upon this mercy of God, which sometimes plucks sinners as a brand from the burning, is foolish and dangerous. The thief on the right of the Savior's cross was granted this grace of repentance in his last agonies and received the promise, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise." But the one on the left hardened his heart against the softening influences of the Savior's words and actions during those terrible hours, and died in his sins. You cannot afford to spurn God's call and to continue in sin, lest like the thief on the left you find no room for repentance. Therefore,

Hasten, O sinner, to be wise,
And stay not for the morrow's sun!
The longer wisdom you despise,
The harder is she to be won.

Hasten, O sinner, to be blest,
And stay not for the morrow's sun,
For fear the curse should thee arrest
Before the morrow is begun.

IX.

WHY JOIN THE CHURCH?

By repentance and conversion you become a member of God's people on earth. This people of God, consisting of all believers, composes the Church of Jesus Christ. Union with this Church by faith in Christ is, therefore, absolutely necessary for salvation. Outside of this Church there is no salvation. Union with this Church is, however, also the only thing that is absolutely necessary in order to be saved. "Upon this rock" (*i. e.,* confession of my name and faith in me) "I will build *my Church,*" said Christ to Peter (Matt. 16, 18). By faith we become members of this Church Universal, and that is all that is necessary for salvation. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16, 31). Only "he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16, 16).

But the word "church" is often used in another sense in the Scriptures. It is frequently employed to designate the outward organization of professing Christians. Thus Paul, in his epistles, speaks of "the church of God which is at Corinth," "the churches of Galatia," "the church of the Thessalonians," etc. (1 Cor. 1, 2; Gal. 1, 2; 1 Thess. 1, 1). This visible organization of Christians in church-bodies is in accordance with the will of God, and membership in such an organization is, therefore, also a duty of those who would be followers of

Jesus. Let us consider some reasons why it is the duty of every Christian to connect himself also outwardly with the people of God.

God Himself has instituted a visible church organization. Already in the Old Testament God had such a church. At that time He chose a special people, the Jews, with whom He made a covenant, to whom He entrusted His Word, and to whom He gave a priesthood and laws. At that time, to become a member of God's people required an incorporation into the Jewish nation by circumcision, the sign of the covenant (Gen. 17).

When Christ came, all this was changed. There was then to be "neither Jew nor Greek," but all were to be "one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3, 28). The Church now was to embrace all nations of the earth, and this necessitated also a change in organization. Hence from the very beginning we hear of local churches, or congregations, *e. g.*, at Corinth, in Galatia, etc., as already mentioned above. A local congregation of this kind Christ Himself has in mind, when in Matthew 18 He enjoins that an offending brother, in the last stage of admonition, is to be brought before "the church." Do you think God would have instituted a church and commanded church-organization, if it was not His earnest desire that all who profess to be His children should join in such organization?

Outward church organization is necessary. Christ wants His kingdom spread among all nations of the world and sinners everywhere brought to repentance. As the means for accomplishing this result, He has instituted the

preaching of the Gospel. "Go ye into all the world and *preach* the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16, 15). "Go ye and teach all nations" (*i. e.,* make disciples, or Christians, of all nations. See Margin), "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28, 19). The preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments are the God-ordained means of bringing sinners into the kingdom of Christ and of keeping them in that kingdom. And to carry out this command of Christ, it is necessary that Christians form organizations, in order that by their united efforts they may be enabled to support their own pastors, who break the bread of life to them, and to send out missionaries to break it to those who are still famishing in the dreary wastes of heathendom and unbelief. For "even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9, 14).

Church organization is necessary even on account of temporal considerations. The Church is the kingdom of Christ *on earth.* Though it is not of the world, yet it is in the world, and it must therefore adapt itself in outward matters to its environments. Christians must have houses of worship where they can meet to hear God's Word. They need schools where their children can be taught, colleges and seminaries where their pastors and teachers can be educated. And many other things are needed to properly carry on the work of the Church. It is necessary, then, that the churches become property-holders. But the holding of property

is subject to regulation by the laws of the State, and under these a certain amount of organization is necessary for such holding of property, leaving out of consideration altogether that here, as well as in all the other work of the Church, union of effort on the part of its members is indispensable.

You, too, my dear friend, are needed to help carry on this work of the Church. Christ has entrusted His work to His children. He has something to do for each one, and He will excuse no one. Each one of His servants receives a talent (Luke 19) with which to work. See that you be not like that wicked servant who buried his talent and brought upon himself the stern rebuke of his Master. Come, join yourself to the children of God, help to do the work that God has laid upon them. Come, while yet it is day; "the night cometh when no man can work."

God's command: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will

be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6, 14. 18). Here God commands His people, in the most explicit terms, to be separate from unbelievers. Certainly nothing could be plainer than the implication that God wants Christians to form a body of their own, separate from the world. And so also to you, my dear friend, comes the command: Come out from among the wicked, and be thou separate, and join thyself to the people of God!

Again Christ says: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10, 32). And Paul writes: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10, 10). Confession of Christ's name before men, according to these and other passages, is an essential part of every man's Christianity. But a very important feature of this confession is to join yourself to the confessors of Christ's name. To stand aloof from them by refusing to become a member of Christ's Church is, or at least may be, tantamount to a denial of Christ's name, for it is almost sure to injure the cause of Christ by strengthening unbelievers in their wickedness and keeping others from becoming Christians who are perhaps not adverse to joining the Church. Beware, then, lest you incur the penalty which Christ Himself attaches to the sin of denying Him: "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before

my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10, 33).

You ought to join for the sake of your fellow-men. It is your duty, first of all, to join the Church because God has instituted the Church, and commands you to join it that you might confess His name and help to carry forward His work on earth. This, then, involves that you ought to join also for the sake of your fellow-men. We have just noted that by standing aloof from the Church you would influence others against coming into the Church. On the other hand, your coming in is likewise sure to exert an influence upon others in the opposite direction. When they see you take a stand for Christ, they, too, will be emboldened to forsake the world and to join themselves to the people of God. And in the Church itself your influence is needed. There are always weak members in the Church who are in danger of falling away again. And Satan is ever busy tempting the Christians and endeavoring to lead them astray. Your influence is needed to help fight this work of the devil in the Church.

Finally, you ought to join for your own sake. You will derive great blessing from a union with the people of God. You know the old saying, "In union there is strength." This likewise has its application in spiritual affairs. Union with believers will help you to fight against temptation and to abstain from sin. If you mingle with wicked men, you are easily misled, perhaps against your own better determination, into questionable or even sinful

practices. And in like manner the company of believers will be a bulwark against the temptation to such practices. Their example, warning, reproof will help to strengthen you in the hour of danger and to raise you up again in case you should fall in consequence of weakness. And in particular also bear in mind that as a member of the Church you will enjoy the guidance of a faithful pastor, whose special duty it is to watch over your soul and to whom you may at all times confide your troubles and look for guidance in all your difficulties. Surely, becoming a member of God's people will secure great blessings to your soul, blessings which you cannot neglect without the gravest danger to your eternal welfare.

Objections.—But perhaps you have some reasons to urge for not joining a church. One objection that is often raised is this:

There are so many unworthy church-members. So many people that go to church and hold membership in it are no better, or even worse, than others that are without. If that is what religion makes of people, you say, then I, for one, will have none of it. Is that your reason for not joining the Church? It is true, sad to say, that there are many unworthy church-members. But is that a valid reason for not joining the Church? There is not a little counterfeit money in circulation; but would not the man be considered foolish who for that reason refused to make use of any money? There are many vicious and criminal citizens

in every state; would you on that account refuse to become a citizen of a state and deprive yourself of all the advantages of such citizenship? Besides, don't you see that your objection defeats itself? The very fact that men complain of unworthy members being found in the Church shows that they regard them out of place there, that they look upon the Church as a place for good people only and upon religion as a power to reform men. Did you ever hear of anybody who thought it strange that wicked people are found outside of the Church? No, that is regarded as self-evident. The world is the place for such people. Would you rather be where the ungodly are in place, or where they are out of place? Is not this the strongest possible reason for joining the Church?

And then, don't you know that the Church, where it is at all alive to its duty, reproves and, if necessary, sifts out such unworthy members? They are not merely tolerated and carried on the church-roll, but they are looked after, both by pastor and fellow members. They are exhorted, warned, reproved, and, if all this proves futile, they are finally cut off as dead members. Did you ever hear of a wicked sinner being reproved and excommunicated by the world? Why, no; he is welcomed there as a boon companion; he is lionized and urged on in his course. Do you still think that the world is better company for you than the Church of God?

I am not good enough. That is another objection advanced by many people for not becoming church-members. Now, if you wait until you become good enough to go to heaven, you will never enter that state of bliss. For in order to do so you must be entirely pure and sinless. In like manner, if you postpone the matter of entering Christ's Church on earth until you are good enough, you will never enter it. For you cannot reach perfection in this life. But if you recognize your utter sinfulness and unworthiness and are willing to trust in the perfection and righteousness of Jesus, then you are fit to enter heaven, and then you are also fit to become a member of Christ's Church on earth. And the more deeply you realize your own unworthiness, the more closely you will cling to Jesus in consequence, the more implicitly you will also rely upon God's help to make you better, and the more fitted you will therefore be for membership in the Church.

There are so many churches, and I do not know which one to join. This again is sadly true that the Church of God is split up into many factions, and it is a hindrance to the spreading of Christ's kingdom that such is the case. But even this does not furnish you with a valid reason for refusing to come into the Church. If on your way to a certain city you come to a place where the road forks, will you turn back in disgust because you do not know which one to take? No, you will inquire and

make sure of the right road to your destination, and then proceed on your way. So on your way through this life to eternity it behooves you to find out which is the road that will take you to the right place, and then to follow it. In other words, you must search which one of the churches is the right one, and then join it. But this is such an important point that we shall have to devote a few special chapters to it.

X.

DOES IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE WHAT CHURCH YOU JOIN?

I have endeavored to impress upon you the importance of finding the church which teaches the pure doctrine of God's Word and to join that church. There is need of this caution. For while some people make the divisions in the Church an excuse for remaining outside of the Church altogether, there are many others who regard very lightly the differences separating the various church bodies, and who therefore think that it matters little what church you join.

Ours is a time of great "tolerance" in religious matters. Many people think that it is of little importance what you believe if only you are honest in your convictions and live right. Not a few even go so far as to say that all — Jews, Mormons, Mohammedans, Buddhists, etc.—are on the way to heaven and are only traveling there by different roads, that at any rate it makes little difference to which one of the Christian denominations one belongs, because they are all agreed in the great vital doctrines of the Christian religion and differ only in minor, unessential matters; that their points of agreement are so much more important than their points of disagreement as to leave really no good reason at all for their remaining apart. Now what does the Bible say to all this?

False teaching is displeasing to God. "Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies and by their lightness" (Jer. 23, 31. 32). "I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrines of Balaam. . . . So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate" (Rev. 2, 14. 15). God hates all false teaching. That ought to be sufficient reason for us to beware of joining any church that holds false doctrines, no matter how insignificant these errors may appear in our eyes.

All false teaching comes from the devil. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4, 1). But perhaps you will interpose: The doctrines the apostle here speaks of are such as deny the great central truths of the Christian religion, *e. g.*, the trinity of God, the redemption of Christ, because such false doctrines necessarily deprive man of salvation. You are wrong, my friend. Paul includes under this term those false teachings, too, which in themselves concern only minor and external matters. For he specifies in the following verses: "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." Neither marrying nor eating certain

meats directly affects our salvation. Yet Paul says that forbidding these things is a "doctrine of devils," because it forbids what God has sanctioned, and teaches something as necessary for salvation that God has left free. All false teaching emanates from the "father of lies," and hence is to be shunned as the devil himself.

All false teaching is therefore dangerous. "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15, 9). All man-made doctrines are vain and useless. God only can lay down the doctrines which we must believe in order to be saved. But false doctrines are not only useless, they are positively dangerous. "Wherefore rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men that turn from the truth" (Tit. 1, 13. 14). That is the great danger lurking in every false doctrine, that it turns man from the truth of God's Word, that it leads him away from the way of salvation as laid down in that Word. For in the last analysis every false doctrine teaches man to trust in his own works, and so causes him to lose sight of Christ. Thus Paul warns the Galatians: "Behold, I Paul say unto you that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing" (Gal. 5, 2). Circumcision had been commanded by God in the Old Testament. Yet Paul says that to submit to it as necessary in the New Testament, when it has been abolished by Christ, is to forfeit all the benefits of Christ's redemption. What, then, shall we say

of such false teachings which God never has commanded, but which are contrary to His revealed Word? Yes, every false doctrine is a dangerous thing, which jeopardizes the eternal welfare of your soul. Can it be a matter of indifference, then, if you join a church which fosters false doctrines?

Hence Scripture warns us against false teachers. Notice first the impressive warning of Christ Himself: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7, 15). False teachers are "ravening wolves," because they destroy men's souls by their false doctrines. Surely, to join a church where false doctrines are taught is not to beware of false prophets! "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4, 1). Here it is made your duty to find out which prophets are false and which are true, which are of God and which of the devil. Every teacher, in as far as he teaches false doctrine, is of the devil and not of God, and every church, in as far as it believes false doctrine, is of the devil and not of God. Do you still think it makes no difference which one you join? "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them" (Rom. 16, 17). Note that the apostle here puts "divisions" and "offenses" on the same plane. Yes, divisions in the church, "contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned," *i. e.,* contrary to

the doctrine taught in God's Word, are offensive, and originators of such divisions fall under the condemnation of Christ: "Woe unto him through whom offenses come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he be cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones" (Luke 17, 1.2). To teach false doctrine and thereby cause divisions in the Church is to offend people, *i. e.*, to endanger their faith and their soul's salvation. Accordingly, those who have thus split up the Church have loaded a heavy burden of responsibility upon themselves, and the blood of those who are lost through their false teaching will be required at their hands. Hence the apostle's awful denunciation: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1, 8). Hence also his earnest warning to mark and avoid those that cause divisions and offenses by false teaching. And, of course, if we are to avoid the false teachers who cause divisions, we are also to avoid the divisions. We are not to connect ourselves with any sect, or false church, where doctrines contrary to the Word of God prevail.

And, contrariwise, Scripture enjoins us to adhere to the pure doctrine of God's Word. Paul writing to Titus, himself a teacher in the Church, sets this down as a requisite of a bishop, or pastor: "Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by *sound doctrine* both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit. 1, 9). And Titus

himself he exhorts: "Speak thou the things which become *sound doctrine*" (Tit. 2, 1), and he directs him to rebuke the Cretians sharply, "that they may be *sound in the faith*" (Tit. 1, 13). Likewise Timothy, another teacher in the Church, is urged by the same apostle: "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1, 13). Thus both teachers and lay-Christians are exhorted in the Bible to seek purity of doctrine and to maintain it. Your duty, then, is also plain in this respect; you are to seek out the church that teaches the pure doctrine of God's Word, and refuse to connect yourself with any other.

No, indeed, it is not an indifferent matter to what church you belong. By joining a church where false doctrines are proclaimed, you endanger your soul, you expose yourself to the seduction of the devil, you disregard the command of your God, and grieve Him by your indifference. It is your duty to find the church that teaches the pure doctrine of God's Word. Which is that church? Let the next chapter answer this question.

XI.

WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH.

The Word of God is the only rule of doctrine and life for the Christian. "If ye *continue in my Word,*" says Jesus, "then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8, 31. 32). Again He says: "*Search the Scriptures;* for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me" (John 5, 39). And Paul writes to his beloved Timothy: "The Holy Scriptures . . . . are able to make thee *wise unto salvation* through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture . . . is *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*" (2 Tim. 3, 15—17). And the Apostle Peter writes to the Christians in the diaspora: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well *that ye take heed* as unto a light that shineth in a dark place" (2 Pet. 1, 19). Already in the Old Testament the Prophet Isaiah directs the Jewish people to the Word of God: "To the Law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (Is. 8, 20). And David says in the beautiful 119th Psalm in which he extols the wonders and glories of God's Word: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119, 105). Would you know,

then, dear friend, which church you ought to join? Find that church which in all things, in every point of doctrine and practice, abides by the Word of God.

The true Lutheran Church abides by the Word of God in all things. "It is written" has ever been her motto from her great founder down to the present day. "I feel as though one little verse of Scripture could make the world too small for me," said the great Reformer. And he acted upon this principle all through his career. See him in that sublime moment before the august assembly of emperor and princes and prelates at Worms, when, commanded to retract his writings and to recant his teachings, he steadfastly declares: Unless I am convinced by testimonies of the Scriptures or by clear arguments, I am conquered by the Holy Scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is captive in God's Word, and I cannot and will not retract anything, since it is unsafe and dangerous to do anything against conscience. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise; so help me God! Amen." And during the important colloquy between him and Zwingli at Marburg concerning the Lord's Supper, Luther took a piece of chalk and wrote before him on the table the words of Christ: "This is my body," and he clung to these words and their plain meaning against all the arguments of his opponents. Zwingli, on the other hand, contended that "God would not ask us to believe such unreasonable things," *viz.*, that Christ's body and blood are truly present in the Sacrament. And this has ever

since been the dividing principle between the Lutheran Church and her opponents: the former adheres steadfastly to the Word of God, all the objections and arguments of human reason to the contrary notwithstanding; the latter claim the right to interpret the Scriptures in accordance with their reason. It would be impossible, within the compass of this booklet, to discuss all the details of Lutheran doctrine and practice, and to show how they harmonize with the Word of God. We must content ourselves with laying down general principles and giving a few examples to illustrate our point.

The doctrine of the Lutheran Church is in accord with the Bible. One point has already been alluded to in the foregoing. In regard to the *Lord's Supper,* the Lutheran Church accepts the words of Christ: "This is my body," "This is my blood," in their natural sense, and accordingly she believes that Christ's body and blood are truly present and received by all communicants, though in a heavenly, supernatural manner, and that His body and blood are given to us for a strengthening of our faith in the forgiveness of our sins. In like manner the Lutheran Church accepts the teaching of Scripture that *Baptism* is not merely a symbol of the new birth, but that it is indeed "the washing of regeneration" (Tit. 3, 5), that we are truly "born of the water and of the Spirit" (John 3, 5), and she refuses to be troubled by the question, "How can water do such great things?" And especially and above all does the Lutheran Church cling to the Bib-

lical teaching in the great central doctrine of the Christian religion, *justification* by faith in Christ, without the deeds of the Law. (See Rom. 3, 20—28; Gal. 3, 16; Eph. 2, 8. 9). This doctrine, as we have already noted (see pages 50, 51), is the doctrine that distinguishes Christianity from all other religions; it is the great central doctrine of Christianity; it is, as Luther puts it, the doctrine with which the Church stands and falls; it is the doctrine from which all other doctrines of our religion radiate, as the spokes of a wheel from the hub. Vitiate this doctrine, and you are sure to corrupt the others also; keep it pure, and you cannot go far wrong in any doctrine. This doctrine of the sinner's justification by faith in the merits of Christ, without his own works of righteousness, you find in its unadulterated Scriptural purity in the Lutheran Church, and there alone. And in this you have the best guaranty that the entire doctrine of the Lutheran Church is in thorough accord with the Word of God, that it is therefore the church which you ought to join.

The practice of the Lutheran Church is based on Scriptural principles throughout. The Bible is not only the sole rule of a Christian's faith, but also of his life. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word" (Ps. 119, 9). "All Scripture is profitable . . . for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3, 16). Hence the Church of Christ must see to it, not only that all its teaching is in thorough accord with the Word of God, but also that

its practice is based on Scriptural principles throughout; in other words, she must judge of the life of her members and her own practices by the test of God's Word.

Now in many things the Bible tells us exactly what we are to do and not to do. Notice, for instance, how closely Christ, in the 18th chapter of Matthew, lays down the mode of procedure in a case of church discipline. In other matters we have no such explicit rules, but we must judge them in accordance with general principles laid down in the Bible. Thus you will search in vain for a Bible passage treating of certain modern forms of amusement, as dancing, theater-going, and the like, for the simple reason that these things were not practiced in the same forms during the Biblical times. And yet the Bible is a sufficient and authoritative guide for all times in regard to all matters of practice and life; it is "profitable for reproof and for instruction in righteousness" in our day as well as it was in Timothy's. It lays down general principles and applies them to such special cases as came under the observation of the sacred writers; and we must now take these same principles and apply them to modern conditions. For God has made us intelligent creatures and has moreover illumined us by His Spirit, and so bids us "*search* the Scriptures," in order that we may learn to understand and apply them better and better.

The Lutheran Church does this. She takes the Bible and applies its principles to all matters of practice and life. Neither reason nor

expediency can induce her to swerve one hair's breadth from this course. Where God's Word has spoken, she obeys, no matter whether it makes her popular or unpopular, whether it causes her to gain or lose in numbers. To discuss details is, of course, out of the question again. It must suffice to have set forth her position on this matter in a general way. But I invite you to examine her claim, and I feel confident that, if you do so without prejudice, you will find it to be based on fact, and be forced to the conclusion that also in this particular she is the church for you to join.

Finally, the Lutheran Church also adheres closely to the Scriptures in distinguishing between essentials and non-essentials. By essentials here is meant everything in Christian doctrine and life that is defined and enjoyed in the Scriptures, and, conversely, by non-essentials, everything that the Word of God has left free. Now we are commanded in the Bible not only to adhere scrupulously to all its commands and to allow nothing and nobody to force us into deviating from them, but we are enjoined with equal emphasis from permitting anybody to legislate for us and to bind our conscience in matters upon which the Bible has not pronounced. "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5, 1), "Let no man therefore judge you" (*i. e.*, set up any law for you, to bind your conscience) "in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow

of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Col. 2, 16. 17). In this very matter Paul himself has given us an example: "But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2, 3—5). These words refer primarily, of course, to the Old Testament ceremonial and Levitical laws which had found their end in Christ. But if the Christians of apostolic times were to stand fast in their liberty wherewith Christ had made them free from these laws, which God Himself had previously laid upon His people, then it is certainly our duty, in a still higher degree, to stand fast in our liberty from all human ordinances that God has never and nowhere commanded or even sanctioned.

To stand fast in our Christian liberty, then, in other words, to distinguish carefully between essentials and non-essentials, and to allow no man or set of men to legislate for us in the Church and to bind our conscience in matters God has left free, is a duty plainly and emphatically laid upon us by His Word. God alone has the right to make the laws for His Church. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren" (Matt. 23, 8). To command anything as binding which God has placed in our Christian liberty is to set up man's authority in the Church in opposition to God's, is virtually

to lay down new terms of salvation and is, therefore, a dangerous procedure, likely to mislead men from the true way of salvation.

Now, here again you will find, my dear friend, that the Lutheran Church follows the way marked out by Scripture. Not only does she hold unyieldingly to all matters of doctrine and practice determined in God's Word, but just as unyieldingly does she refuse to be bound in any matters not so determined. Thus, to mention a few examples: Christ has abolished the Old Testament Sabbath. (Compare Col. 2, 16, quoted above. Also Rom. 14, 5.) Therefore the Lutheran Church, in contrast with most other Protestant denominations, maintains that our Sunday is, in no sense, on a level with the Jewish Sabbath, which was divinely instituted, but that Sunday was chosen by the apostolic church in the exercise of its Christian liberty. Therefore the Lutheran Church stoutly refuses to be bound to any legalistic observance of the day. Again, the Bible forbids only the abuse, but not the temperate use, of intoxicants. And therefore the Lutheran Church refuses to be driven by our modern temperance fanatics into the position that every use of these beverages is sinful.

And thus you will find on examination that in all points the Lutheran Church "stands fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," that always and everywhere, in distinguishing between essentials and non-essentials, she follows the Word of God, and it alone. And thus you cannot but decide that here again she proves herself to be the church with which you ought to connect yourself.

Conclusion

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24, 15). The choice is put before you to-day, just as it was put before Israel by Joshua. There is only one alternative, and it is the same for all men: "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7, 13. 14). There are two ways, only two, that lead through this life to eternity. There is the wide gate and the broad way, that is pleasant to travel. It is the way of sin. On it you find all kinds of pleasure and amusement. In traveling it, you need not place any restraint on your lust and desires, you can enjoy yourself to your heart's content. And you will find many companions to accompany you on the journey, for "many there be which go in thereat." In short, it is the way which our sinful heart prefers to travel. But it "leadeth to destruction," it ends in eternal misery and woe. It will bring you to the place "where their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh" (Is. 66, 24; Mark 9, 44).

The other is the strait gate and the narrow way. To travel it you must deny yourself and take up your cross. (Matt. 16, 24.) You must

forsake sin and all sinful pleasures, so dear to your corrupt heart, and strive after holiness (Hebr. 12, 14). You must forsake the great and gay company of worldlings and join yourself to the small and despised band of Christians, for "few there be that find it," and you will expose yourself to the mockery and ridicule, and perhaps to the persecution of the world. (John 15, 19; 2 Tim. 3, 12). But this narrow way, so unpleasant for our flesh to travel, "leadeth unto life." It will take you to that happy place where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21, 4); to the place where there "is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore" (Ps. 16, 11).

This is your alternative, my dear friend. You can travel only one of these two roads: either you must travel the narrow way to life or the broad way to destruction. You cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6, 24). You cannot serve God and Satan at the same time. Therefore "choose this day whom you will serve." God grant that your choice may be that of Joshua: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

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